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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1765
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2227
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2532
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000635

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/ELA; ALSO FOR A/S SILVERBERG AND
PDAS WARLICK
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/PHEE/KUMAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [UNSC](#) [EAIR](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: BEIRUT UPDATE AS OF 1045 MAY 9

REF: A. BEIRUT 634
[1](#)B. BEIRUT 618

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) As of 1045 on May 9, the situation remains tense (Ref A) with fighting between Saad Hariri's Future Movement supporters and Hizballah-Amal Movement supporters, especially in southern Beirut. We are seeing a series of successful positional takeovers of Future positions by Hizballah, which is then turning it over to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Some LAF officers predict that Hizballah will next turn to "cleaning out" Druze leader Walid Jumblatt's positions. Saad offered a four-point "deal" to Hizballah on television the previous night, and Hizballah rejected a deal this morning, but it is unclear whether it is the same deal.

TIMELINE OF LATEST NEWS

[1](#)2. (C)

1045: RPGs have hit the outer fence of Saad Hariri's Qoreitam residence. Senior advisor to Saad Hariri Ghattas Khoury from inside Qoreitam informs the Charge that all inside are safe and sound.

1025: Press reports that Walid Jumblatt has departed his Clemenceau residence.

1000: Charge spoke to Mohammed Chatah, senior advisor to Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. Chatah has moved from his home to join Siniora at the Grand Serail for the duration.

Chatah said that PM Siniora believes this is an "historic moment" for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). He explained that the "wait and see" strategy followed by the LAF ended up "ruining" the army in previous years. Chatah said that the circumstances now are urgent and the LAF needs to be able to protect people from violence against innocent people by multiple groups on the ground (supporters of Hizballah, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri's Amal Movement, and Saad Hariri's Future Movement).

Chatah noted that the Druze had closed the road from Beirut to Sidon, while the Sunnis had cut off other routes preventing Hizballah access to areas of the Bekaa Valley in what he dubbed "a positional battle by the political forces." He then reverted to discussing this "historic moment" for the army, and urged U.S. support for the LAF to bolster its

ability to provide law and order. He pressed for rapid U.S. decisions on some of the outstanding requests for LAF assistance. Chatah told Charge he met with PM Siniora this morning to decide if the PM should make a public address. No decision has yet been reached, Chatah reported.

0945: Defense Attache, en route to see LAF Commander Michel Sleiman, reported that LAF regiment and brigade commanders on the ground are "furious" because they believe they are being compelled to serve in a "follow and support mission" to Hizballah. Hizballah has taken over Saad Hariri's Future TV offices and has turned them over to the LAF. What appears to be happening, the LAF officers believe, is that Hizballah is taking over locations, turning them over to the army, and "cleaning out" Future supporters. The LAF officers reported that they believe Hizballah will next turn to March 14 figure Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and will focus on Jumblatt's offices and his residence (where the LAF is now stationed) and will then go to the Shouf mountains, Jumblatt's stronghold. Last night's fighting in southern Beirut showed the LAF is abandoning some positions to Hizballah in south Beirut, according to the Defense Attache.

0945: Jordanian Ambassador told us that Jordan is evacuating its university students.

0845: Ghattas Khoury, senior advisor to Saad Hariri, characterized to the Charge as a "coup d'etat" the takeover of Future TV offices by Hizballah, which then turned it over to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The LAF is calmly restoring order. He and Saad are safe and sound "for the

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moment" at Saad's Qoreitam residence.

Saad had offered a four-point deal the previous night to Hizballah but Hizballah SYG Hassan Nasrallah rejected it this morning (it is not clear if it is the same deal). The deal discussed in Saad's public address called first, for the Cabinet's two decisions (Ref B) be referred to the LAF; second, all armed militias be removed from the streets and the removal of road obstacles; third, Sleiman be elected as the consensus president; and four, Sleiman presides over the National Dialogue.

0807: Broadcasting of local and international Future TV has halted.

0725: Clashes in Hamra area occur between Future and Hizballah/Amal supporters. (Note: Two Amcit Mercy Corps contractors contacted the Embassy for advice/assistance but have been advised to stand fast at this point. End note.)

0715: ISF reported an armed attack on the Future Movement's newspaper building, setting it afire in Ramlet al-Bayda area.

0600: ISF reported to us that nine people have died and 20 others are wounded from the previous night's gunfire clashes.

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